

Australian Lure Fishing Podcast [Episode 622](#)



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Lee Rayner

Tournament Angler And Fishing Personality

Over many years, Lee has left his mark on many styles of fishing for just as many different species. A very versatile angler, Lee is well known for his television productions, from “Tuna Bluefin Tactics”, “Snapper Fishing Tactics” and “Whiting Fishing Tactics” back in 2008 to his long running fishing show “Fishing Edge”, which takes him all over Australia fishing for every imaginable species. These days he can be found creating awesome fishing content for Anaconda’s Youtube channel.



Lee’s Popper Fishing Tips For Bluefin Tuna

- As the Southern Bluefin Tuna fishery rebounds we’re finding all kinds of different opportunities arise that haven’t been seen for many years, if at all. Landbased fishing and casting poppers or stickbaits at fish ranging from 10kg schoolies to 100kg barrels are good examples.
- During the Autumn/winter period trolling can be very effective, with a range of skirts and diving minnows in the lure spread. Lures in the 4-6” size are fine for smaller fish, but 8-10” lures are better if there are big fish around.
- Coming into summer, the school fish gather off Melbourne from Torquay to Westernport in masses. In rough weather, trolling is very effective, but in smoother conditions they can be very difficult to tempt by trolling.

- In calm conditions, especially in early season (ie January) they are more receptive to a popper than a trolled lure. Look for mutton birds sitting on the water surface and sticking their head in the water – these birds are watching the tuna. Casting a popper around the surface sitting mutton birds will often pull a tuna from 10-15m below the surface, even though trolling won't tempt them.
- It's also worth sitting in an area after a bustup and casting poppers around, especially if there are muttonbirds around.
- Lee has discovered that often the school of tuna will have moved on 2-3minutes ago, but there will be a few fish lagging behind that willingly take a lure. These fish are behind the main school mopping up scraps and will take a lure when you feel like the fish have moved on.
- It's not a bad idea to have a pair of bolt cutters on the boat in case you get a hook in your skin – regular fishing pliers won't cut the wire that quality hooks are made from.
- When it comes to finding fish, it's good to have a network of anglers to get recent intel of where the fish have been. If you mark bait, stay in the general area and it's likely tuna will turn up. If they're at a particular depth, simply follow that contour until you find them.
- Watch your sounder closely for water temperature changes and/or baitfish that are being menaced by predators.
- There's not much bottom structure in the waters off Melbourne, but tuna love bays and often sit 5km off a headland or in a line between the headlands on either side of a bay.
- Tide changes are definitely worth fishing. Sometimes the fish will instantly switch on when the tide changes. Likewise, moon rise or moon set can be worth extra effort.
- There's a common belief that school tuna don't chew on a full moon, but Lee occasionally has great sessions on a full moon.
- Placement of your cast is critical when throwing poppers. It's important to work out which way the fish are feeding and put the lure well in front of them and work it across their path of movement. Sometimes the angle the lure is presented is super important.
- Tuna often feed into the wind, so positioning your boat upwind allows the angler to make long, wind assisted casts. Poppers are usually taken at the end of a long cast, rather than close to the boat, so casting distance is important. Plus, the lure is moving away from the approaching fish, which is normal for a baitfish.

Lee's Tuna Popping Tackle

- An 8000 size Shimano Stradic reel loaded with 30lb braid, and coupled with a 7' Ocea Plugger PE3 Spin rod is light enough to fish with all day and will throw a 130-150 mm popper

very long distances. A 60lb Black Magic tough trace leader is sufficient for protection and won't drag the popper face down into the water, Lee adds an Oceans Legacy access swivel or crane swivel with a split ring.

- The Ocea Plugger is more of a stickbaiting rod, but the softness is beneficial to help prevent over-popping the lure.

Lee's Poppers For Southern Bluefin Fishing

- 130mm Halco Roosta Popper or Maria 160mm Pop Queen. Work this lure with short, gentle pops, not hard, aggressive rips.
- The hooks on the Halco are sufficient for the tackle Lee uses, and the Maria has Owner ST66 hooks fitted as standard. However, Lee likes to switch the rear hook over to a large inline single as it makes it easier to release fish that have taken the lure down deeper.
- SBT can be surprisingly fussy about which popper they will take at times, so if you're not getting bites, it's worth changing lures. Colours can be important too, Lee finds pilchard colours, redheads, and lures with a bit of pink in them are all worth trying. For hard bodies, the "king brown" colour is very effective. Having multiple rigged rods is better and more efficient than switching lures in the middle of a hot session.

Looking After Southern Bluefin Tuna

- Please don't keep a tuna if you can't look after it properly. They need to be killed, bled, gilled and gutted and chilled down within minutes to protect the flesh from spoiling.
- A fish of 80-90kg requires 12-14 bags of ice to chill it down. If you're taking some to eat it's better to target the school fish as they are easier to manage properly.